

**City of Eau Claire  
Plan Commission Minutes  
City Hall, Council Chambers  
August 3, 2015 7:00 p.m.**

Members Present: Messrs. Radabaugh, Seymour, Pederson, Granlund, Brenholt, Weld  
Ms. Mitchell, Ebert

Staff Present: Messrs. Tufte, Noel, Genskow

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Weld.

**1. SITE PLAN (SP-1532) – Apartment building, 811 & 815 Chippewa Street**

Mr. Tufte presented a request to approve a site plan for an apartment building at 811 and 815 Chippewa Street. The site plan notes a six-unit 20 bedroom structure with each unit having a main floor entrance in the front and back, a living room, kitchen, laundry, and bathroom. The upper floors contain two bedrooms and a bathroom each. Lower floors show one bedroom, a family room, and a bathroom for the middle four units. The two outer units will have two bedrooms. By Zoning Code, the apartment has two 4-bedroom lodging houses and four 3-bedroom dwelling units. The applicant states the three-bedroom units would be rented to only three persons. There are 14 parking stalls proposed. The Commission may grant a 20 percent reduction from the required 16 stalls for adding bike racks and being near bus access.

Terry Moore with Herrick & Hart Law Office at 116 W. Grand Avenue, speaking on behalf of the applicant, Robert Johnson, stated they have followed the guidance from the planning office and have amended their plans to reflect the advice. Rental units vary depending on need at a given time and so no market analysis was done. They tried to address neighborhood concerns about this being a dorm-style project by opening it up to families. The three-bedroom units are to attract families, along with a family room and outdoor green space. They have met the code for parking, but if all tenants had cars they would have to figure out themselves where to park. They cannot divide the building into two because they would have to meet setbacks. Reducing the project to less than 20 bedrooms will make it financially difficult to redevelop. The building scale is not out of keeping when looking at the neighborhood as a whole.

Helene Smiar, 320 Broadway Street, President of the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association, spoke in opposition regarding the footprint, size, scale, mass and character per surrounding homes. A dorm-style project in an R-M district is not appropriate and the developer should build something like a four-unit building to compliment the surrounding area. Higher density should be built along Water Street. She wondered about the units being converted into more bedrooms and an increase in parking. She stated the City downzoned the neighborhood to ameliorate heavy rental conversions when the zoning was R-3 and R-4 for higher density.

Jeff DeGrave, 133 Lake Street, stated this building is a monstrosity and is not in proportion to the surrounding structures. He presented a scaled mock-up of the proposal to show how the 37-foot tall building and its mass would look alongside existing homes. An aerial photo was shown on how older 1960s apartments were out of scale with the neighborhood. He shared an example of how this project could fit the neighborhood better by being divided into two. He was not against redevelopment opportunities so long as projects are kept in scale.

Barbara Gramenz, 612 Chippewa Street, was against the project and stated she is a homeowner near the site and thought the added density will create code enforcement nuisance problems.

David Mortimer, 304 Sixth Avenue, stated the project is too big, and if approved, the neighborhood plan is subject to this poor precedence. He asked to vote the proposal down.

Nick Smiar, 320 Broadway Street, was concerned about over saturation of rentals in the neighborhood and believed this project is not fitting with the immediate homes next to the site.

Marcia Brandner, 629 Menomonie Street, had concerns with there not being enough proposed parking on the site for student rentals.

Robert Johnson, 5201 Stonewood Drive and architect for the project, disputed that the project is 50 percent taller than adjacent buildings. He stated there are other buildings in the neighborhood that are 37 feet tall. They would gladly design the roof to be shorter but they tried to accommodate the neighborhood's desire to add character, hence they added gables and a higher pitched roof.

Mr. Moore stated the zoning is R-M and the project density is appropriate for the zoning. The developer is complying with the provisions of code. They are also trying to help move renters out of the core of the neighborhood and into areas more appropriate for density.

Ms. Mitchell stated R-M zoning allows for a range and co-existing mixture of homes and small apartment buildings. She thought the project is not a small apartment building and is not in proportion with the existing homes in the area. Mr. Brenholt was concerned with the size and the precedence for the neighborhood. Mr. Pederson thought the project should be smaller and perhaps two separate buildings. Mr. Weld recognized the developer's spirit to work with the Commission and neighborhood but the project is still too large.

Mr. Radabaugh stated these older homes have seen their time and redevelopment opportunities like this project are in order. More renters with this project would lessen the pressure on the single-family homes being rented.

Mr. Radabaugh moved to approve the site plan. Mr. Granlund seconded. The motion was denied with all voting nay except Mr. Radabaugh and Mr. Granlund.

2. **SITE PLAN (SP-1533) – Mixed Use Development, 101 N. Dewey Street**

Mr. Tufte presented a request to approve a site plan for a mixed-use development at 101 N. Dewey Street. The building reuse project is for a 100-seat restaurant, 40-seat bar and deck. There will also be a 140-seat banquet facility in the lower level along with ten apartments in the upper two floors. The site plan shows 101 stalls with six tenant garages. Landscaping should be increased along the trail, garages and parking lot with more trees and a low hedge. Two trees should be added along the bio-retention area. Waterways and Parks Commission recommended approval. A site plan amendment would be needed for future changes to the east of the lot.

Jack Kaiser of Cigan Properties at 323 N. Dewey Street, stated he bought the building in 2002 but other projects took priority. Today the timing is right to redevelop this downtown location. The basement is out of the floodplain. Staff recommendations are acceptable and the building should be constructed during the winter and opened by summer 2016.

Marcia Brandner, 629 Menomonie Street, commended the owner on redeveloping the site. Jeff DeGrave, 133 Lake Street, stated bike traffic will be high to this establishment so more bike parking should be added if there is demand.

Jeremy Gragert, 451 Lincoln Avenue, stated his excitement about the redevelopment but was concerned with the amount of the parking along the river. He would have liked to have seen more greenspace because people needing to park could use the two ramps located less than three blocks away. He felt the ten-foot setback for parking from the top of the bank was too generous. He was concerned about the trail crossing and wondered if the trail could go along the bank of the river to alleviate the dangerous crossing.

Mr. Kaiser stated they have a need to maintain parking on-site, plus they may need the extra stalls if an east-end recreational area is developed. They may put more bike racks in if there is a need. The bike trail was supposed to go along the river but the City negotiated a land swap of his railroad right of way with the river land. The bank is difficult to make into a trail now. He agreed that the bike trail crossing on Dewey Street is dangerous.

Mr. Seymour moved to approve the site plan, subject to staff report conditions. Mr. Brenholt seconded and the motion carried.

3. **DISCUSSION/DIRECTION**

**A. Rooming Houses**

Mr. Tufte presented a modified draft ordinance for Commission input. He stated a conditional use permit would be needed for a rooming house and general criteria has been set out to judge projects rather than tying it to specific lot size standards. The Commission directed to set up a public hearing for considering the ordinance amendment.

**B. Comprehensive Plan Update**

Mr. Tufte reviewed the draft Plan Implementation Chapter. He corrected several project dates that were in error, discussed other future projects and stated a neighborhood planning summit would be this fall if the Council approves the Comprehensive Plan.

**C. Code Compliance Items**

None.

**D. Future Agenda Items**

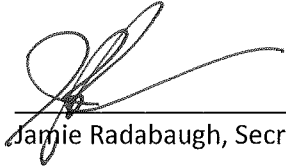
None.

**E. Additions or Corrections to Minutes**

None.

4. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of July 20, 2015 were approved.



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Jamie Radabaugh, Secretary